

Ethics

Choices, Choices, Choices

Ethics

- Ethics is the study of good and evil, right and wrong
- For Christians, ethics and theology are inseparable, because ethics is rooted in the character of God.

Moral Absolutes

- Biblical Christian ethics believes in moral absolutes—standards that exist for everyone regardless of era or culture.
- Absolutes are vital to society:
"If there is no absolute beyond man's ideas, then there is no final appeal to judge between individuals and groups whose moral judgments conflict. We are merely left with conflicting opinions."

~Francis Schaeffer



Christian Moral Absolutes

- They are revealed in the Bible.
 - They do not (and cannot) address every moral dilemma.
 - There are enough specifics and general guidelines to construct a basic moral foundation.

A Christian's Ethical Responsibilities

- Christians are to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love their neighbors as themselves.

Ethics and Islam

- Muhammad is the moral example for Muslims.
- Everything Muhammad did was good because his actions were approved by Allah.
 - His actions were not guided by morality.
 - His actions defined morality.
 - This is interesting because the Hadith does not paint a flattering picture of his life.

Ethics and Islam

- Jihad
 - For Muslims, Jihad is the battle against temptation and sin
 - for the sake of self-control
 - for the development of virtue
 - Jihad is also battling against anything and anyone who oppose Islam
 - It is a Muslim's most self-sacrificing action.

Ethics and Islam

- Why behave ethically?
 - To develop personal virtue and spirituality
 - To better the state of others
 - To strengthen relationships
 - Because of the coming judgment (This is the strongest motivation.)

Ethics and Secular Humanism

- The ultimate question for secular humanists is “which code of ethics should I use?”
 - It arises from disagreement over the foundation of morality.
- There is a range of ethical understanding
 - “no-truth” thesis—there is nothing true or false about moral values
 - Moral relativism—morals are relative (changeable/adaptable) to the individual and situation

Marxist/Leninist Ethics

Marx and Lenin

- Denied that morals were crucial to humanity
- Believed that morality is dictated by biological and social evolution
- Believed that a future classless society will bring a “new morality” determined by its understanding of the Marxist dialectic



Marxist/Leninist Ethics

- Rejected religious moral codes as “old morality” used by upper classes to oppress the working class
- Believed that only revolution could overthrow the upper classes and lift up the workers

Cosmic Humanist Ethics

- Because cosmic humanists are ultimately pantheists, they believe each individual defines right and wrong for himself/herself.
- No one can judge the standards of another as wrong or right. They are merely different.

Cosmic Humanist Ethics

- Cosmic humanists believe in *tolerance*
 - It is used to mean **acceptance** of all moral views.
 - By definition, *tolerance* does not mean acceptance as valid. It means you disagree but will be respectful.
- The distinction between good and evil is blurry
 - There is no absolute right or wrong.
 - What may appear evil in this life may have been (or may be) good in a different life.
- The universal system of justice is *karma*—it determines a person's destiny based on his/her actions and behavior through each phase of existence.

Postmodern Ethics

- Most postmodernists embrace an ethical system
 - It is not based on an unchanging universal system
 - It is not obedience to a non-human authority
- Postmodernists do not like the term *relativism*
 - It means that all standards are equal.
 - They clearly believe some views are better than others.
 - The problem is that without an external authority, there is no way to prove that one standard is better than another.



Postmodern Ethics

- How are standards determined?
 - by coercion
 - consensus.
- Each culture develops its own standards (because there is no absolute standard).
- Standards are constantly changing /adapting.

